

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

I. SCOPE

This overview focuses on Library of Congress holdings of material issued in or about the area covered by the 49 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, including the Indian Ocean Islands. Although most Africa-related material is dispersed in the general book and periodical collections, impressive works of Africana may also be found in special collections of legal publications, manuscripts, maps, microforms, music, newspapers, prints, photographs, and films in the various custodial divisions of the Library. Collectively, these collections encompass every major field of study except technical agriculture and clinical medicine and cover the entire spectrum of African studies from anthropology to zoology.

II. SIZE

An overall piece count has not been maintained by geographic source or content for additions to the collections. However, a shelflist count shows that the DT classification exceeds 40,000 titles. It is the largest single block of publications on Africa, consisting of histories, general descriptive works, yearbooks, and surveys. A 25,000-piece ephemeral collection containing rare and historical postcards, political pamphlets, leaflets, conference papers, research reports, policy papers, and posters social, political, and economic topics is housed in the African Section. 150 sub-Saharan African newspapers titles are received currently. The MARC Serial file contains approximately 20,000 African periodical titles.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The Library has a longstanding role in acquiring and providing access to material about Africa. Beginning with the Thomas Jefferson collection, which included several books on Africa, the Library has developed one of the world's most outstanding collections of Africana.

The collections are especially strong in areas such as history, linguistics, and literature. Description and travel accounts by travelers, explorers, missionaries, and basic government documents provide useful primary research data. Approximately 50 major African languages are represented in the collections in the form of biblical translations, dictionaries, readers, as well as general fiction and nonfiction. A unique collection of early publications in the Yoruba language is the William and Berta Bascom Yoruba Collection. There are ongoing efforts to maintain the outstanding quality of the African literature holdings in fiction, drama, poetry, and literary criticism.

African government documents holdings are also noteworthy. Particularly impressive are government publications issued by the respective colonial governments and subsequently issued by the African states, particularly in the years immediately following independence.

VI. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

The Library's collection of modern Eastern African titles is one of the finest in the world. Most of this material, works in a variety of languages and formats, was acquired during the past twenty-five years by the Nairobi field office. Established in 1966, the Nairobi Office now acquires material from 29 eastern, southern, and western African countries. The American Colonization Society (ACS) collection has long been a key research source for scholars of Liberian history and related topics. It provides primary data on the society and its work in founding the country. Particularly important are the ACS manuscript records, housed in the Manuscript Division. That division has other collections which, although not centered entirely on Africa, contain Africa-related material. They include the papers of Thurgood Marshall, A. Philip Randolph, the NAACP, and the Naval Historical Foundation.

Some 150,000 maps of Africa and its administrative and geographic divisions are available in the Geography and Map Division. Included are maps dating back to the 16th century, as well as detailed and up-to-date maps based upon aerial surveys. A number of African recordings are found in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division's *Archive of World Literature on Tape*. The Voice of America's series "Conversations with African Writers" (such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Gabriel Okara, and Grace Ogot) as well as Library of Congress recordings of individual authors are included in the archive.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Library's vast Africana collections are additionally complemented and enhanced by the growing and broad range of electronic research materials on Africa available on the global Internet. This includes on-line catalogs of the world's top libraries with large Africana collections, bibliographies from research institutions around the world, electronic Journals and electronic news archives that specialize in African affairs, and abstracts and full-length reports on Africa from US, African, and international organizations.

Significant digitized collections include the following:

Crisis in Darfur, Sudan

A Web Archive of the conflict in Darfur including sites of key relief organizations responding to the crisis, a sampling of news reports, and the responses of government, international organizations and the general public in the U.S. and

worldwide to the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Islamic Manuscripts from Mali

'Islamic Manuscripts from Mali' is the newest collection to be made available on the Library's Global Gateway Web site of international materials. Featuring 32 manuscripts from the Mamma Haidara Commemorative Library and the Library of Cheick Zyni Baye of Boujbeha, both in Timbuktu, Mali, the manuscripts presented online are displayed in their entirety and are an exemplary grouping that showcase the wide variety of subjects covered by the written traditions of Timbuktu, Mali, and West Africa. An online exhibit of items from the Mamma Haidara Commemorative Library is also available.

The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History and Culture

The African-American Mosaic collection contains primary source materials documenting the "back-to-Africa" movement represented by the American Colonization Society (ACS) and the founding of Liberia.

Portals to the World

The Library of Congress offers selective information on African nations and other areas of the world through its Portals to the World gateway site. Topics for each country include: General Resources, Business, Commerce, Economy, Culture, Education, Genealogy, Geography and Environment, media and communications, Government, Politics, Law, Language and Literature, Science and Technology, and other subjects.

Quarterly Index of African Periodical Literature

Published by the Library of Congress Office, Nairobi, Kenya, this online index covers 750 selected scholarly periodicals which are acquired from a variety of sources, including commercial publishers, international, governmental and non-governmental organizations from 29 African countries in Eastern, Southern and Western Africa.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

Despite ongoing and in-depth acquisitions efforts, the absence of an established book trade in most sub-Saharan African countries has resulted in gaps in our holdings. It is difficult to identify and to actually obtain African government documents and noncommercial publications, many of which are issued in limited quantity and quickly go out of print.

Another category of lacunae is serial publications. Many serial sets are incomplete due to factors as the disorganized book trade, difficulty of communication and transportation in the wide area covered by the Section, and political unrest.